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# NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Washington, D. C.

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## THE HISTORY OF WEST VIRGINIA'S STATE NUTRITION COUNCIL

"Let's get together to talk over nutrition work in West Virginia. . . . Can we state some common objectives? . . . Are we developing a nutrition consciousness on the part of the general public? How can we do this more effectively? . . . How can we work together to reach common objectives?"

### First Committee, 1927-1929, Concentrates on Children

Thus the call was given by Nat T. Frame, then Director of the Agricultural Extension Service at West Virginia University, for the first statewide nutrition meeting which was held at the State 4-H Camp, Jackson's Mill, on May 16, 1927. The meeting grew out of the close working relationship between the Extension Service and Mrs. Jean T. Dillon of the State Department of Health. Mrs. Dillon felt that the nutrition phase of maternal and child health needed to be explored and discussed by a group of professional workers in health and nutrition.

Represented at this meeting, in addition to the State Department of Health and the Extension Service, were the Public Health Council, Tuberculosis Association, Department of Vocational Education, State Home Economics Association, and Home Economics Division of the College of Agriculture. The day's discussion brought an awareness of need for more intensive work to improve the nutrition of children. Before the meeting closed, a committee was appointed to plan for a further meeting and to develop a coordinated program on nutrition work with children. Later in 1927, the meeting was held and the first West Virginia State Nutrition Committee was organized.

The idea of representatives of agencies and organizations meeting to discuss common nutrition objectives was closely identified with West Virginia's Country Life Movement—a vital motivating force in the State for many years. Its basic philosophy is that progress in community life is a result of leaders of the various groups in an area coming together to exchange ideas, to face facts, to make decisions in setting goals, and to unite efforts in attaining goals. This philosophy prevailed in State Nutrition group work from the beginning.

The first Committee, which functioned from 1927 to 1929, conducted a number of demonstration programs in selected counties on feeding underweight, malnourished school children. Also, it stimulated each agency and organization to greater activity in the promotion of good nutrition during the 1930's when the original committee ceased to function.

### Second Committee, 1940 on, Began as a Defense Effort

In summer 1940, when the U. S. Department of Agriculture was faced with nutrition problems in the national defense program, Land-Grant Colleges were asked to take leadership in organizing State nutrition committees.

In November 1940, Charles E. Lawall, President of West Virginia University (WVU), responded to the request of the Land-Grant College Association by asking representatives of WVU and of various organizations and agencies in West Virginia to serve on a State Nutrition Committee. Miss Ruth Noer, Head, Division of Home Economics at WVU, was invited to serve as chairman. Since

### THIS ISSUE

Miss Gertrude Humphreys, State Leader, Home Demonstration work, WVU Agricultural Extension Service, and a charter member of the West Virginia State Nutrition Council, has had major responsibility for writing and assembling the information in this issue on the development and progress of their Council. Many other Council members assisted her.

The West Virginia State Nutrition Council has functioned without interruption for 15 years. Its members are confident it will continue to play an important part in nutrition education throughout West Virginia in the years ahead.

This is the first time an issue of NCN is about the work of one nutrition group and written by its members. The idea was the result of a visit to the annual meeting of the West Virginia State Nutrition Council. From time to time other committees will be asked to share their story of step-by-step growth. We hope these records will be idea-generating and encouraging especially to groups considering the formation of a nutrition committee.

the first one on January 23, 1941, meetings have been held regularly 4 times a year.

At first meetings were attended by representatives of the University, Farm Security Administration, Works Progress Administration, Vocational Home Economics, and Public Health Department. The committee has enlarged over the years to include representatives of many organizations and groups which have indicated a desire to enter into the committee's activities.

The Council (Committee changed to a Council in 1952) has brought together representatives of groups which together serve practically all segments of the State's population. It includes all educational institutions, many State and Federal governmental agencies, the Red Cross, rural organizations, public utility companies, processors and handlers of foods and related products, and labor groups.

## **Reasons for Growth and Progress**

Perhaps you wonder how a Council of more than 60 members, with varied interests and different backgrounds of education and experience, can function year after year to spread the gospel of good nutrition to people throughout the State. Is the one common interest—nutrition—enough to hold the group together? What has made the Council click? Here are some of many reasons for its growth and progress:

1. Many agencies, organizations, and nutrition-minded groups—35 at the beginning of 1956—are represented; hence, meetings provide helpful contacts for all members.
2. Meetings are informal and friendly. They give opportunity for exchanging ideas, and getting acquainted. Members look forward to meetings not only to be brought up to date on matters of nutrition, but also as friendly get-togethers.
3. Use of subcommittees for important parts of the year's program has given a large number of the members a chance to help plan and carry out the program. Activity, responsibility, and interest go hand in hand.
4. Positions of leadership have been filled by representatives of various organizations and agencies. Each Council officer has been able to enlist the active interest of leaders of organizations or groups not previously represented on the Council.
5. No dues or fees are required for membership.
6. Constructive, worth-while educational and action projects have been a part of the Council's program. Projects have had 4 types of objectives—(a) to get facts to use as a basis for future nutrition work in the State; (b) to stimulate a greater public interest in foods and nutrition; (c) to give nutrition information, and (d) to get results through coordinated effort (such as enactment of legislation for enrichment of white flour and bread).
7. Active interest of individuals who believe in the work

of the Council and who are willing to work for its objectives, has given continuity and strength.

8. Organizations, through cash contributions, and government agencies, through the time of their personnel and the use of their facilities, have played a vital part.
9. Interest and active support of the Nutrition Programs Branch of USDA, especially in the early years, made it possible for the State Council to plan and to complete some of its most significant projects. Also, it made possible employment of an Executive Secretary, Mabel Best, from April 1944 to June 1945.

## **Major Activities**

### **NUTRITION INSTITUTES AND REFRESHER COURSES**

To interest more people in nutrition and to help professional workers keep up to date, the Nutrition Committee in its early years held annual 1-day institutes for professional and lay groups. Also, refresher courses were held at State Colleges and West Virginia University for home economists, school lunch supervisors, and other professional workers.

### **WARTIME PROGRAMS**

Victory Gardens, Food-for-Freedom, Share-the-Meat—these were slogans around which food production, preservation, and rationing revolved. The State Committee, working largely through county committees, did much to help people produce more of the family's food, and to use foods available for civilians to best nutritional advantage.

County Nutrition Committees, which played an important part during this period, were organized in 51 of the State's 55 counties.

### **FOOD PRESERVATION**

When Mrs. West Virginia Homemaker wants to know how to can, freeze, or otherwise preserve foods for her family, she may ask the home demonstration agent, the home economics teacher, the public utility home economist, or other persons who teach food preservation—and receive the same instructions from each.

Uniform food preservation instructions were prepared as the result of conferences of representatives of the agencies, institutions, and groups that do educational work in food preservation.

### **SCHOOL LUNCHES**

This is a good example of the Council's function in keeping all members informed about statewide programs and projects. Reports on this important phase of community nutrition have been made by Martha Bonar, State Supervisor of the School Lunch Program, at practically every Council meeting. Thus, all Council members become familiar with developments and problems and learn how their respective county and local groups may give assistance. Efforts of the various organizations have helped im-

measurably to extend and strengthen the School Lunch Program.

In recent years emphasis has been on getting more milk in more schools. A special committee has helped take information on the Special School Milk Program to school officials and members of PTAs, rural groups, and other interested and influential citizens.

#### NUTRITION IN INDUSTRY

Since 1943, the subcommittee on nutrition in industry has been arousing the interest of management in many industrial plants in the State. Miss Estelle Ingoldsby, Industrial Nursing Consultant, State Department of Health, spearheaded this work through plant managers and industrial nurses. Pamphlets, Basic-7 food guides, good breakfast posters, and other informational materials were distributed and used in the plants or were put in pay envelopes. Demonstrations and classes on food preparation, lunches, and breakfasts were arranged for wives of workers in several plants.

As a result, many snack bars and milk bars were added; milk was made available in plants in addition to soft drinks and, in some plants, more time was allowed for lunch.

#### STATE LEGISLATION TO ENRICH WHITE FLOUR AND BREAD

This is one of the Council's "success stories" that illustrates the effectiveness of united action toward a common goal. Legislation was originated and carried through to its enactment by the State Legislature through the efforts of the Council and member organizations. Before the bill was introduced, educational work on the nutritional value of enrichment was done among organizations such as PTAs, farm women's clubs, Federated Women's Clubs, nurses' associations, Farm Bureau, bakers' and restaurant associations. Members of the Legislature were given information through County Nutrition Committees.

In addition to educational groundwork, the success of this venture may be attributed to the constant and diligent efforts of Council members and Executive Secretary while the Legislature was in session. Intensive work started before the bill was introduced on February 6, 1945, and did not cease until the Governor signed it on March 8 of that year.

#### WORK WITH MINING GROUPS

Women representatives of the United Mine Workers Auxiliary were appointed to serve on County Nutrition Committees. In some counties they actively promoted nutrition programs among mining families and distributed nutrition material.

#### NUTRITION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

More teaching of nutrition in elementary schools of the State has been actively encouraged since 1941. Progress has

been made in having foods and nutrition included as a part of the health unit and in giving nutrition information to elementary teachers through workshops and college courses.

#### FACT-FINDING STUDIES IN 3 TYPICAL COUNTIES

The State Nutrition Committee conducted fact-finding studies in Raleigh County (mining area), Marion County (combination of mining, industry, and rural), and Hardy County (rural) in the 1944-45 school year. This was done under the leadership of Miss Eloise Cofer, West Virginia Extension Specialist in Foods and Nutrition, and the late Dr. Walter Wilkins, Chief of the Nutrition Section, States Relations Division, U. S. Public Health Service, at that time detailed to the War Food Administration.

A group of 17 persons, representing State and County Departments of Education, Departments of Health, and Agricultural Extension Service, and the Executive Secretary of the State Nutrition Committee, made a study of 1,200 school children (fifth to tenth grades) in the 3 counties. Information about each child included (1) a 24-hour diet record, (2) condition of teeth and gums, (3) hemoglobin determination, and (4) height and weight.

A printed, popular leaflet—"Are Your Children Well Fed?"—with pertinent facts from the study, was given wide distribution. The findings created a greater awareness by the public of the need for improving the food habits and the nutrition of school children. Several Council projects and programs resulted, including:

1. Good Breakfast Program.
2. School Lunch Program.
3. Vitamin C project.
4. Use of more milk in schools—and in homes.
5. Gardening and food preservation (production and use of more green and yellow vegetables and tomatoes).

#### GOOD BREAKFAST PROGRAM

"Start the Day the Good Breakfast Way" was the slogan used in the Council's statewide Good Breakfast Program. The Council was prompted to launch the program by the survey that showed 14 out of 100 school children ate no breakfast, and that breakfasts of 90 percent of the remainder were poor. Also, the Council's president, Miss Estelle Ingoldsby, an enthusiastic supporter of good breakfasts, kept the program constantly before the Council.

Mrs. Rachel Ferguson, State Department of Health Nutritionist, and a committee worked months on the plans before the Council agreed that:

1. It should be a long-time educational program and not a "flash-in-the-pan" campaign.
2. It should reach all areas of the State—rural and urban—all income levels, and all ages.
3. The Council should have the cooperation and support of many groups throughout the State.

Before the program was actually started, letters were sent to heads of over 100 agencies and organizations, inviting them to a meeting to consider the matter. Over one-third of the groups contacted attended the first meeting, and others pledged their support.

Plans were made. The Governor declared a Good Breakfast Week. People were alerted. The program got off with a bang. Cooperation of the Cereal Institute was most helpful.

In 9 key cities, a Kick-off Breakfast was held. Guests included committee chairmen, heads of organizations, radio and press folks, doctors, the mayor, and other celebrities who helped start the program in each city and its county. Teachers taught Good Breakfasts. Clubs conducted programs, distributed literature, showed films, and set up exhibits. Health workers and educational agencies included it in their programs. Stores ran ads in newspapers and over the radio.

#### JOINT MEETINGS WITH COUNTY MEDICAL SOCIETIES

The idea of having meetings with various medical societies came up soon after the Council was formed. An active member of the Council, Dr. Hu C. Myers, representing the State Medical Association, helped to promote joint meetings to enlist the interest of more physicians in advances in nutrition and also to give Council members the advantage of hearing nationally-known authorities in the field of nutrition.

So once each year, in October or November, the Council has a meeting with one of the county medical societies. The speaker is selected by the program chairman of the county medical society and the president of the Council. The physician-speaker is always an outstanding teacher of nutrition or a research worker in this field—such as Dr. Norman Jolliffe, Dr. A. Hughes Bryan, Dr. John B. Youmans, and Dr. James M. Hundley. Meetings are fully publicized in the West Virginia Medical Journal. Thus the influence of the speaker is spread over the entire State.

Joint meetings have been held in almost every section of West Virginia. Through these meetings, more physicians have become aware of the work of the Council and have subsequently helped with its educational work by serving as speakers to lay groups on dietary deficiencies, obesity, and other nutrition problems.

Council members are enthusiastic about the results of this phase of the nutrition program and expect to continue it. Most of the county medical societies which have helped with these meetings have cordially invited the Council back.

#### WEEKLY RADIO PROGRAM

Newspaper articles, leaflets for home demonstration groups, and other methods were used to tell the vitamin C story, and encourage growing and buying of vitamin C-rich foods. A weekly 15-minute radio series for this purpose was inaugurated in the spring of 1948 over a Clarksburg station by Mrs. Carmella M. Murphy. Now 8 years later, she still gives weekly nutrition programs for homemakers.

#### CAMPAIGN AGAINST MISINFORMATION ON FOODS, NUTRITION

To combat food superstitions, prejudices, and fads, a committee on misinformation on foods and nutrition was formed in 1953 to determine what nutritional misinformation is reaching the public, and to correct misinformation by getting facts to the people.

To date, misinformation on weight control has received major emphasis. Three newspaper articles, six radio scripts, and a tape recording were prepared by Council members. These materials were distributed by the WVU Agricultural Extension Service to newspapers throughout the State and to 53 radio stations which serve West Virginia.

#### A SOUNDING BOARD FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMS

At meetings, at least once a year, the nutrition research program of the WVU Agricultural Experiment Station is presented. Members have an opportunity to give opinions on projects. Also, members help carry research information from the University to people in the State.

#### HOW IS THE COUNCIL FINANCED?

The Council's work is carried on largely through its member groups; hence, it operates on a small budget. Over a 10-year period, expenses have averaged about \$100 a year. When funds are needed, the finance committee writes to member organizations—not to government agency members—"suggesting" that contributions will be welcome. Response has been prompt and contributions adequate to take care of the Council's necessary expenses.

#### PROGRESS TOWARDS OBJECTIVES

This brief description of the Council's work hits only the high points of the many things it has done towards its objectives:

To promote good nutrition among people of the State.

To coordinate efforts of all organizations and government agencies interested in nutrition.

To encourage research and fact-finding studies as a basis for sound programs.

To stimulate action for good nutrition in local communities.